

1                                   USDA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
2                                   FARM BILL FORUM NUTRITION TITLE  
3                                   COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA  
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6   USDA REPRESENTATIVES:   Kate A. Coler,  
7   Deputy Under Secretary  
8   Jessica Shahin,  
9   Food Stamp Program-HQ  
10   Donald E. Arnette,  
11   Regional Administrator  
12                                   FARM BILL PUBLIC FORUM HELD ON NOVEMBER 17, 2005, AT  
13                                   12:00 P.M., AT HARVEST HOPE FOOD BANK, 2220 SHOP ROAD,  
14                                   COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA, 29202, BEFORE JANET L.  
15                                   LEVEQUE, REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL REPORTER.  
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2 MS. HOLLAND: Good morning, or afternoon, as it  
3 just has changed to afternoon. I'm Denise Holland, the  
4 Executive Director of Harvest Hope Food Bank here. I want  
5 to welcome you all to the Food Bank. We are very happy to  
6 have all of the USDA representatives here.

7 Before the introduction of Ms. Coler, let me tell  
8 you a little bit about Harvest Hope Food Bank and also about  
9 the other food banks that serve South Carolina. In total,  
10 there are six food banks that serve South Carolina, the  
11 entire state, and we are strategically located in  
12 Greenville, Charleston, here in Columbia, we have a branch  
13 in Aiken, I have a branch in Florence, and then Metrolina  
14 Food Bank in Charlotte serves two counties in South Carolina  
15 as well.

16 For Harvest Hope Food Bank, we serve 18 counties  
17 around the central part of South Carolina; and in the 2001  
18 America Second Harvest Hunger Study, of which we are all  
19 members, we provide for 56,000 people per week who are  
20 suffering from hunger. We do that through 350 member  
21 agencies that are food pantries, soup kitchens, emergency  
22 shelters, group homes, who are very dependent on the donated  
23 supplies of food in addition to the USDA supplies of food.

24 They come here regularly. This is the area that  
25 they come to receive the product we have staged through the

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1 warehouse, and normally we have pallets out in this area for  
2 them to pick from as well.

3 Serving those hungry people every day is a  
4 personal crisis to them, and it happens very frequently.

5 There's food insecurity, which means maybe they have gone  
6 for a day or missed -- they know that they will miss a  
7 couple of meals over the next month. When they suffer from  
8 hunger it means that they probably have gone for a day or  
9 several full days without food.

10 For Harvest Hope Food Bank, and I'm sure the other  
11 food bank representatives here from North Carolina and South  
12 Carolina, we work very hard to secure donated food product  
13 in our areas to supplement the USDA supplies.

14 You know, for my food bank, we don't turn anything  
15 down, whether it's fresh produce or it's frozen meat or  
16 canned goods, even cakes, pies and breads in the area, we  
17 really take that. And we want to make it as nutritious as  
18 possible. Certainly the USDA supplies help us to focus on  
19 nutrition, but you're going to see cakes, pies, baked bread,  
20 all that sort of thing as well. Hopefully, after this is  
21 over you can go on a tour with us.

22 All of that is important. When someone is  
23 suffering from hunger, not only do we need to provide the  
24 very best we can, nutrition, for them, but we need to make  
25 them feel better right then and there.

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1 I'm reminded frequently of a little girl who came  
2 with her mommy here to the food bank, and the mom, in  
3 talking to our counselors -- because as a food bank we're a  
4 little different, we have our own emergency food pantry on  
5 site. And that little girl, in walking out of the food bank  
6 with her mom, she looked at her, and she was talking about  
7 the things that she could see in the bag, and there were

8 some apples and oranges and frozen meat and peanut butter  
9 and jelly and that sort of thing, but the thing that she was  
10 most excited about was there was a birthday cake sitting on  
11 top. And she said, Look, Mommy, I've never had a birthday  
12 cake before.

13 So you never really know what of that donated food  
14 supply or that USDA food supply is going to not only  
15 physically make them feel better but emotionally meet some  
16 needs as well. When you're hungry, it's the full spectrum  
17 that needs to be met, so we do thank you for your  
18 participation in today's public forum.

19 It is important to have this policy discussion  
20 amongst those who deal with it on grand scales and amongst  
21 those of us who deal with it sometimes on also a much  
22 smaller scale.

23 It affects many, many hungry people, particularly  
24 those in South Carolina. We are extremely grateful for the  
25 work of the USDA and, certainly, our local Department of

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1 Social Services, to supplement our donated food product with  
2 wonderful nutritious food from TFAP, which is called the  
3 Emergency Food Assistance Program, and CSFP, which is the  
4 commodity supplemental program. Without these supplies,  
5 many families and children and our elderly in South Carolina  
6 would simply not have what they need to eat.

7 Two weeks ago the USDA released the 2004 Household  
8 Food Insecurity Report, finding that food insecurity and  
9 hunger had gotten worse around the nation and especially  
10 here in South Carolina. The prevalence of food insecurity

11 in South Carolina went from 11.3 percent of South Carolina  
12 households to 14.8 percent of households.

13 If that were not bad enough, the rates of food  
14 insecurity with hunger went from 3.6 percent to 5.5 percent  
15 of households. Put very simply another way, South Carolina  
16 went from being fifth, the fifth most hungry state in the  
17 nation, to the second most hungry state. That means for us  
18 in South Carolina, as food banks, food pantries, soup  
19 kitchens, emergency shelters, we have thousands more people  
20 who are suffering much more than one simple family crisis.  
21 They are suffering a multitude of family crises. They are  
22 not having food today and they have much greater anxiety  
23 about are they going to have food tomorrow.

24 I'm deeply troubled about the findings in this  
25 report. I'm troubled because, regularly, with our other

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1 food banks here in South Carolina and North Carolina and  
2 other states, we meet regularly to talk about that. We know  
3 we are putting every resource we possibly can, and we're  
4 doing that very efficiently to make hunger go away, yet it's  
5 gotten worse.

6 So it begs to ask the question: How can we serve  
7 South Carolina better in our population to assure that no  
8 one goes to bed hungry tonight, and how can we prevent them  
9 from suffering this calamity tomorrow, next week, next  
10 month, next year.

11 I am proud to say that the Deputy Undersecretary  
12 Kate Coler has proven to be a leader, recognizing that the  
13 challenges to reducing hunger here in South Carolina and

14 around the nation are numerous. The scenarios are  
15 completely varied and much needs to be done.

16 Ms. Coler has been a great visionary for the cause  
17 of food insecurity and hunger. Since 2003, she has  
18 successfully implemented provisions in the 2002 Farm Bill  
19 that expanded eligibility for the Food Stamp Program,  
20 developing initiatives, outreach initiatives that included  
21 the conversion of paper coupons to the electronic benefit  
22 transfer cards and the expansion of those eligibility  
23 benefits.

24 Reporting to Eric Boss, the Undersecretary, and  
25 through their combined teamwork, 5.8 million more eligible

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1 people are receiving food stamps, 1.6 million more children  
2 receive a free or reduced-priced school lunch. Over 1.5  
3 million more children receive school breakfast, and over  
4 400,000 more women, infants and children receive assistance  
5 through the Women, Children and Infants Program.

6 The USDA staff are great supporters of the food  
7 banks across the nation and the many-member agencies that we  
8 support to put a stop to hunger. Through this leadership of  
9 the entire staff -- and I really must call, also, your  
10 attention to the people who make this happen right here in  
11 South Carolina. They are completely engaged at all levels.  
12 We meet with them nationally, we meet with them locally as a  
13 state, and they are very involved with us. They work very  
14 diligently to understand that it takes all of us. It takes  
15 the non-profits, government, business and community leaders  
16 to make a difference. We would not be here without all of

17 the people supporting us to do that work.

18 We sincerely appreciate Ms. Coler and the work  
19 that she does and the work that the entire staff does, and  
20 we are pleased to have all of them here.

21 After the public forum we would like you, if you  
22 are interested, to gather over here beside the roll-up door.  
23 It will come up, and I'll be glad to take you on a short  
24 tour of the food bank so you can actually see the work that  
25 we do every day.

8

1 Thank you very much.

2 MR. DONALD ARNETTE: Thank you, Ms. Holland.

3 I really appreciate the warm welcome and  
4 explanation about our programs. But more importantly today,  
5 I'm so thankful that we have this facility to meet all of  
6 you here in Columbia, South Carolina, so it's good to be  
7 here.

8 We have many staff, and we'll introduce them a bit  
9 later, but the most important person, Ms. Kate Coler, Deputy  
10 Undersecretary, and we will be visiting with her very, very  
11 shortly.

12 But before we do that, I have some housekeeping  
13 rules and issues to share with you, and I'd like to do that.  
14 And then after I've shared the housekeeping, I'll turn the  
15 mike over to Jessica Shahin, who is our deputy for the Food  
16 Stamp Program out of Washington, D.C. She'll speak just a  
17 bit about the forum and what will be discussed here today.

18 So with that, I have several rules, issues, that  
19 I'd like to share. Attendees that have written comments may

20 I leave them in the box that's designated for written  
21 comments. We have one here, we have a table here, and  
22 certainly there was another as you signed in earlier today.  
23 Second: For attendees making oral statements, you  
24 were provided a blue card with a number and a location,  
25 either left or right. If your card has "right," then you

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1 will speak from the microphone on your right, and those with  
2 "left," you will speak from the microphone on your left.  
3 Next, at the front of the room, staff will hold up  
4 a card with a number on it. That will be your cue to move  
5 to the microphone so that you can make your oral comments.  
6 Next, before you begin to make your statement,  
7 please state your name, your affiliation, and provide your  
8 city and state. I'll say that again: Your name, your  
9 affiliation, and provide your city and state.  
10 Five: We will have ample time, obviously, to  
11 accommodate everyone if your comments exceed five minutes,  
12 so we're going to be -- in other forums we've cut it to  
13 five, but today, if you have to, we can allow you to exceed  
14 the five minutes, but we will at some point say we have to  
15 move on. We will not be taking a break, so if you need to  
16 leave the forum while it's in session, please feel free to  
17 do so.  
18 Seven: We have a sign language interpreter, as  
19 you can see, that will be available for the length of the  
20 forum. However, the interpreter will sign for the  
21 introduction only unless there is a need for her to  
22 continue. So is there anyone in the forum who has a need



23 for the sign language interpreter to continue beyond the  
24 introduction? I'd like to see you raise your hands so we  
25 can know. We want to use her time very effectively, but if

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1 there is no need for her services we would like to  
2 acknowledge that now. So if you need sign language  
3 interpreting services, let us know. I don't see any hands.  
4 Okay. Very good.

5 Thank you. I appreciate that. Thanks a lot.

6 (Sign language interpreter leaves the forum.)

7 What we're doing is making sure that everyone has  
8 an opportunity to be heard. Based on those who signed up,  
9 we didn't have an indication from all of you who are here.  
10 We wanted to ask that question. Thank you, and we will  
11 continue with the forum this morning.

12 At this point I'll turn it over to Ms. Shahin and  
13 she'll talk about the forum and the next step and where we  
14 go from here. Thank you.

15 MS. JESSICA SHAHIN: Can you guys hear me? I have  
16 a pretty big voice. All right, wonderful.

17 I couldn't help but be struck when Don said that  
18 we have some rules. Well, of course. We're the Feds, of  
19 course we have rules. I also want to just say, didn't  
20 Denise do a wonderful job of contextualizing what we're here  
21 for? I think she's left. I'm sorry. She did a fabulous  
22 job. She's absolutely right. These food forums  
23 specifically are set up -- oh, hey, Kate is here, you don't  
24 need me anymore.

25 MS. KATE COLER: Hello everyone. Are we just

1    kicking off?

2                    MS. JESSICA SHAHIN: We are just kicking off, and  
3    I'll let you take over. I was just telling them that our  
4    host did a fabulous job of putting context around how we  
5    have to work together and that's what the forums are about,  
6    is letting us hear from you, who have that kind of direct  
7    impact on the people that we mutually serve, so we're very  
8    happy to have you here and thank you very much for coming.

9                    MS. KATE COLER: Thank you.

10                   And on behalf of Secretary Shahin, thank you very  
11    much for coming to this. This is the last of the 50 Farm  
12    Bill forums that we've had around the country. And thank  
13    you to our host here. We're going to have time for a tour  
14    of this facility afterwards, so we're thankful for that.

15                   These forums are to address all titles of the Farm  
16    Bill, so if people have subjects outside of the original  
17    Title 3, I'm happy to receive those as well, but today's  
18    forum is focused on the Nutrition title primarily. There  
19    are seven nutrition programs that are up for reauthorization  
20    in the next Farm Bill. I think we saw a lot of success in  
21    the 2002 Farm Bill and many improvements to the programs,  
22    and we want to hear from you how those have been  
23    implemented, what you think needs to continue, where there  
24    can be changes to make the programs better. We want all of  
25    your ideas because we do recognize the value of

1 partnerships. I think we've seen successes in our programs  
2 and it can't just be because of the actions of USDA. It  
3 takes all partners. It takes the state and local levels of  
4 government, it takes community and faith-based  
5 organizations, it takes the programs working together. And  
6 I think we want to build upon the success of the 2002 Farm  
7 Bill and see how we can take these programs into the next  
8 time the Farm Bill's going to be reauthorized, in 2007.

9           We primarily, with our nutrition programs, have  
10 been focusing on hunger, but we've identified a new problem  
11 over the last few years and that is the issue of obesity.  
12 And we do know that these two problems coexist. And we look  
13 to our programs to not only fight hunger but how can we also  
14 use them as tools to fight obesity and help move people to a  
15 healthier lifestyle. I'm interested in your comments on  
16 that as well.

17           So again, we are here to listen today. I  
18 apologize for the delay. There were bad winds in New York  
19 and we were on the runway for an hour, but happy to be here,  
20 looking forward to your comments. They will be recorded  
21 verbatim and we're also doing summaries. We're going to use  
22 this information at USDA as we develop policy to put forward  
23 before Congress, because Congress actually makes the  
24 ultimate decisions, but your input to us and all of our  
25 voices together in this debate will, hopefully, make these

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1 programs as strong as they can be. So with that we will  
2 listen. Thank you.

3           MR. LARRY YOUNG: Good afternoon. My name is

4 Larry Young. I'm employed by the South Carolina Department  
5 of Social Services here in Columbia, South Carolina. I am  
6 the Program Director for the Emergency Food Assistance  
7 Program, TFAP, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program,  
8 CSFP, as well as the Seniors Farmers Market Program.

9 I would like to thank you, Undersecretary Coler,  
10 for being here today, along with all the other USDA  
11 officials. We are very happy for the opportunity to be able  
12 to speak to you about these very important programs.

13 TFAP, CSFP and the Farmers Market Program are very  
14 crucial to our efforts here in South Carolina to address  
15 hunger and food insecurity. Because of these programs, a  
16 very conservative estimate would indicate that USDA  
17 contributes to at least 2.5 million meals annually here in  
18 South Carolina to our local low-income individuals. And,  
19 unfortunately, that is still not enough.

20 I would like to make some comments this afternoon  
21 regarding the Seniors Farmers Market Program, and I've also  
22 been asked to make a brief statement concerning the FSE&T  
23 program. My agency has administered the Farmers Market  
24 Program since it began in 2001. We look forward to its  
25 continuation with the new regulations and the addition of

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1 some administrative funds, obviously.

2 During the past five years approximately 110,000  
3 seniors have received benefits through our program. That  
4 number could be much higher if additional funding were made  
5 available. The Senior Farmers Market Program is currently  
6 available in 32 of our state's 46 counties.

7 I recommend that as the Seniors Farmers Market  
8 Program is being considered in the next Farm Bill, that you  
9 keep in mind the operational realities of the program. The  
10 success of our program depends upon the collaboration of  
11 many organizations. We work very closely with our state WIC  
12 agency, our state department of agriculture, and our aging  
13 offices here in the state.

14 Most importantly, however, our program would not  
15 survive without the support of smaller non-state agencies  
16 such as local councils on aging, churches, community action  
17 agencies, et cetera. These organizations are on the front  
18 line promoting the program, distributing the benefits,  
19 determining the eligibility, and doing many other things  
20 which are required for a successful program.

21 As you are aware, a diverse group of organizations  
22 needed to make the program more accessible to program  
23 participants in all areas being served. It is because of  
24 this diversity we urge that simplification of the rules and  
25 paperwork requirements be a key consideration as the program

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1 goes forward.

2 All organizations are not created equally. There  
3 are varying levels of staff and/or volunteers available at  
4 these agencies to operate the program, as well as expertise  
5 in operating federal programs.

6 Let me conclude by stating, the Seniors Farmers  
7 Market Program depends primarily on the structure of  
8 community-based charitable services that existed long before  
9 the program. Seniors Farmers Market distribution sites are

10 typically neighborhood organizations that distribute small  
11 amounts of benefits. Often, they are staffed mainly or  
12 entirely by volunteers. The unit value of the benefit  
13 provided to the participant is small. Therefore, the  
14 program should be made accountable to the taxpayer in a way  
15 that does not impose excessive paperwork burden on the  
16 sites.

17 My concluding statement was actually an excerpt  
18 from the Food Distribution Memo, National Policy Memorandum  
19 FD036, that addresses local level recordkeeping in the TFAP  
20 Program. I modified it by substituting "Seniors Farmers  
21 Market Program" where it said "TFAP."

22 I believe the premise of the memo would remain  
23 just as valid if it had been written for the Seniors Farmers  
24 Market Program.

25 Regarding the FSE&T Program, we have one comment

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1 that we would like to offer, and it's concerning making  
2 employment an accountable component within the FSE&T  
3 Program. Currently, there is no financial incentive for  
4 state agencies to place FSE&T clients in jobs. As  
5 employment is the ultimate goal of the program, as even the  
6 name "Food Stamp Employment & Training" would indicate, we  
7 feel that one part of the equation should be employment.

8 Thank you for the opportunity to speak and welcome  
9 to South Carolina. Thank you.

10 MS. SUSAN FROST: Good afternoon. My name is  
11 Susan Frost. I'm a registered dietitian and I live in  
12 Chapin, South Carolina. I've been in practice in South

13 Carolina for 27 years, working with senior nutrition  
14 programs, pregnant women, infants, Head Start, and  
15 school-age children, home health, wellness programs, and am  
16 a regional WIC director. I've served on a board of  
17 directors of the food bank in Greenwood, South Carolina.

18 I'm presenting comments today on behalf of the  
19 South Carolina and the American Dietetic Association.

20 The public needs an uncompromising commitment from  
21 the government to advance nutrition knowledge and help  
22 people apply that knowledge in order to maintain and improve  
23 their health. Millions of Americans benefit from USDA  
24 assistance programs, yet we still see hunger in the United  
25 States and in South Carolina.

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1 Coexisting with hunger is a national epidemic of  
2 overweight and obesity. In fact, overweight and obesity is  
3 the largest manifestation of malnutrition in the United  
4 States today.

5 The next Farm Bill needs to address four key  
6 areas: USDA's food assistance programs must be available to  
7 those in need and adequately funded. Improving the  
8 nutrition status of Americans needs to rise in priority in  
9 food assistance programs, other food programs, and for all  
10 Americans.

11 Increased investment in nutrition education and  
12 nutrition research is necessary and it must be sustained.  
13 Having up-to-date knowledge on the nutrition composition of  
14 our food supply is essential for all the work in food  
15 nutrition and health to bear fruit. If we expect consumers

16 to take personal responsibility for making healthy choices,  
17 then we have a responsibility to make sure that consumers  
18 are adequately prepared.

19 The government must invest in nutrition research  
20 and nutrition education necessary to give Americans the  
21 knowledge and ability to make their own nutrition choices.  
22 These nutrition recommendations and programs for the public  
23 must be based on sound science. Only the federal government  
24 has the public mandate and resources to carry out research  
25 on human nutrition needs and to develop dietary guidance

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1 that forms the basis for all federal nutrition programs.

2 We believe federal research, exploring the  
3 relationships between diet, particularly dietary patterns,  
4 and health is especially important.

5 Thank you for the opportunity to speak today, and  
6 again welcome.

7 MS. SUE BERKOWITZ: Thank you for providing me  
8 with the opportunity to speak. I'm Sue Berkowitz and I'm  
9 with the South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center,  
10 which is located here in Columbia, South Carolina

11 South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center is a  
12 nonprofit dedicated to adequacy for low-income people in  
13 South Carolina to effect systemic change by acting in and  
14 through the courts, the legislature, administrative  
15 agencies, community and the media, and helping others to do  
16 the same through education, training and co-counseling.

17 I'm here to talk about the Food Stamp Program.  
18 The Food Stamp Program was created to provide low-income



19 families and individuals with resources they need to  
20 purchase an adequate diet. The program, which is the single  
21 most anti-hunger program in America, does an excellent job  
22 of providing poor households with basic nutritional support.  
23 Without food stamps, many families, particularly working  
24 poor families, people with disabilities and seniors simply  
25 could not afford to put food on their table every day

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1 I want to tell you how impressed I am with the  
2 South Carolina Department of Social Services, who has done  
3 so much to reach out to eligible South Carolinians,  
4 increasing the number who participate in the Food Stamp  
5 Program over the past few years, and its proud willingness  
6 to partner with organizations and local communities for the  
7 good of our citizens. And our host, Harvest Hope Food Bank,  
8 who, I know you can see, has so much to be proud of, has  
9 been working to assist families in need with their  
10 application through a new partnership that they developed  
11 with DSS to increase food stamp participation, and I can't  
12 tell you how proud I am to participate with both of these  
13 agencies.

14 But even with all of these positive steps, the  
15 Food Stamp Program could be made better. Reauthorization is  
16 an opportunity to review the program strengths and its  
17 weaknesses and to find ways to improve the program for the  
18 individuals in need.

19 I would like to take a moment to first discuss the  
20 program's most significant strengths, these aspects of the  
21 program should be preserved and if at all possible need to

22 be increased.

23 First, the program is an entitlement. It is an  
24 open-ended entitlement program. Food stamps support  
25 communities during times of economic downturn by

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1 automatically responding to the increased need. This is  
2 both true on a national level and on a local level. I think  
3 we've seen that, unfortunately, due to the national  
4 tragedies we've seen over the last few months. It provides  
5 needed food to hungry people while supporting our local  
6 business.

7 Second: The program has a national benefit  
8 structure. Although states are provided flexibility in how  
9 they administer the program, the food stamp benefit is  
10 essentially uniform across all states. This ensures that  
11 poor families, wherever they live, have adequate nutritional  
12 resources.

13 And third: Benefits are targeted to those most in  
14 need. The Food Stamp Program targets benefits to those who  
15 need and are least able to afford an adequate diet. While  
16 targeting the benefits have added some complexity to the  
17 program -- I'm sure we all grouse about at times -- it  
18 provides additional help to the families who struggle the  
19 most.

20 But there are a number of challenges facing the  
21 Food Stamp Program that can impact our citizens' ability to  
22 access needed resources, and this is especially true among  
23 working families.

24 Eligibility restrictions: There are some groups

25 of low-income people who need assistance purchasing an

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1 adequate diet but who are ineligible for the program. I  
2 don't need to remind you who two of those significant groups  
3 are. First, legal immigrants and children and childless  
4 unemployed workers. While progress is made in restoring  
5 benefits to these groups, all eligibility limits on these  
6 groups needs to be lifted.

7           We also need to reexamine the level in which we  
8 cut individual families and households from receipt of food  
9 stamps. The current level of 130 percent of poverty leave  
10 many needy working poor and elderly households, who  
11 desperately need food, from accessing needed assistance. We  
12 need to increase our minimum gross income threshold from its  
13 current 130 percent of the federal poverty level, and it  
14 needs to be done in reauthorization.

15           Increasing the gross income level rewards working  
16 families struggling to make ends meet while supporting the  
17 family's nutritional needs, and that's what the Food Stamp  
18 Program should be about.

19           In addition, there are certain asset limits that  
20 ought to be reevaluated in the coming Farm Bill. For  
21 example, the \$2,000-financial asset limit results in making  
22 genuinely needy people ineligible. The asset limit has not  
23 been increased for most households in two decades and  
24 undermines savings goals, such as retirement and education,  
25 which the Administration is trying to promote everywhere

1 else. While it may have appeared to be a generous amount  
2 when it was set, it has no relationship to the asset limits,  
3 what it means in 2005 dollars, and needs to be increased.

4           And the adequacy of benefits: The food stamp  
5 benefit, as you know, is based on the Thrifty Food Plan and  
6 the costs are very bare bones monthly food budget. Many  
7 would argue it's too low. Across-the-board cuts enacted in  
8 1996 have sharply eroded the purchasing power of the  
9 allotment, and the 1996 benefit reductions and the overall  
10 adequacy of the food stamp benefit structure need to be  
11 reexamined

12           I have two teenage boys and a very large husband.  
13 When I look at the amount of the Thrifty Food Plan, and I  
14 think of how I could try to make ends meet, especially when  
15 we're also talking about adequate nutrition, I know I  
16 couldn't do it, and I'm amazed at the individuals we work  
17 with and the dignity that they use to try to make ends meet  
18 with the Thrifty Food Plan, but it needs to be reevaluated.

19           Improving access to the Food Stamp Program: In  
20 recent years we've had much progress to reach more people in  
21 South Carolina. Our own state is a shining example of how  
22 outreach has reached so many, especially the working poor.  
23 Still too many people do not participate. Some of the  
24 eligible find barriers to participation, make it difficult  
25 or too costly. We need to continue to explore ways to

1 facilitate enrollment and make it easier to participate.

2 But, most importantly, let's not take any steps  
3 backwards. Categorical eligibility has been one of the most  
4 important steps our state has taken to increase  
5 participation, especially among the elderly and the working  
6 poor in our state. I can't describe in words how outrageous  
7 it is to me that that would even be a recommendation, in  
8 2005, to take away categorical eligibility and hamper the  
9 State's ability to access and to outreach to those who are  
10 in need, and would strongly, strongly urge the  
11 Administration to step away from any efforts to remove  
12 categorical eligibility. And I want to applaud the Senate  
13 and the reconciliation bill for not putting it in as they  
14 are going forward.

15 The last step I think we need to take, and  
16 especially looking at the increase in utility bills that we  
17 see in our state and all over the country. We need to  
18 increase the SUA. South Carolina has recently learned and  
19 requested permission to increase its SUA from \$188 a month  
20 to \$244 a month. You need to do that this week. This is  
21 based on the dramatic rate hikes our utilities have been  
22 already approved in South Carolina. Our largest utility has  
23 been approved for a 50 percent rate hike for gas in South  
24 Carolina.

25 I know that both Kansas and Maine have asked for

24

1 an increase of the SUA based on prospective increased  
2 utility costs. I understand that's not the way you've done  
3 it in the past. It needs to be considered and we need to  
4 act on this fast. No one, absolutely no one should decide

5 between heat in their home and food on their table.

6 We must build on the strength of the Food Stamp  
7 Program and we must not block-grant this program. We've  
8 seen how effective it is during times of emergency and how,  
9 the way that, the fact that it is an entitlement allows the  
10 flexibility and the growth that's needed during times of  
11 need.

12 And I know I've taken a lot more time. Thank  
13 goodness it's a small crowd, but the last thing I would like  
14 to comment on is, you were asking us to provide you with how  
15 we offset any of these increases. And I agree with  
16 responsible budgeting. I believe in fiscal discipline and I  
17 wholeheartedly believe we shouldn't have a growing deficit.  
18 But I also believe it's unfair of us to ask those of us who  
19 come forward to you on behalf of the hungry to offer you  
20 offsets that are neither fair or reasonable given the  
21 Administration's position in recent years to allow \$200  
22 billion in tax cuts to go without any offsets whatsoever.  
23 It's disturbing that fiscal discipline must only be  
24 addressed when it comes to programs that help those in need,  
25 but not when it comes in connection to tax cuts for the

25

1 well-to-do.

2 Quite simply, we must provide the Administration  
3 with options to pay for improvements in the program that  
4 serve our neediest, while -- it's wrong of the  
5 Administration to do that while it continues to advocate for  
6 tax cuts for the wealthiest while not offering one offset.

7 I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide

8 this testimony. I'm pleased that you've taken the time to  
9 discuss these critical issues outside of the Beltway and  
10 have had 50 of these forums, and that you've taken it to  
11 places like Little Columbia, South California. I hope  
12 you'll take these comments to heart and strengthen our Food  
13 Stamp Program in 2007. Thank you.

14 MS. SANDY ALLEN: My name is Sandy Allen. I'm a  
15 program director for food stamp policy with the South  
16 Carolina Department of Social Services. I'm here today in  
17 Columbia, I'm from Columbia, speaking on behalf  
18 of (inaudible.)

19 We do want to thank USDA for the opportunity to  
20 have these forums for the public to voice concerns regarding  
21 the reauthorization of the Farm Bill legislation in 2007.

22 The South Carolina Department of Social Services  
23 feels that it is essential that the current Food Stamp  
24 Program evolve to simplify the administration of program  
25 rules for state agencies while making program access

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1 considerably easier for the food stamp eligible public. We  
2 ask that the federal government recognize, and plan  
3 accordingly, that the changes necessary to modernize our  
4 current program will impose a fiscal impact, and the offset  
5 of which should not be carried by the neediest segments of  
6 our national population.

7 We also ask that we formally rename the Food Stamp  
8 Program, with the dissolution of "food stamp," to better  
9 reflect the nutrition support aspect of the program.

10 That said, we are asking that the following be

11 considered: For improving program access, we would like to  
12 eliminate the face-to-face interview requirement for  
13 recertifying households. This would be essentially  
14 beneficial to the elderly and disabled and to working poor  
15 families.

16 For targeting those in need we ask that more of a  
17 targeted marketing focus be concentrated on the elderly;  
18 that we increase the income eligibility requirements; that  
19 we remove the asset test for households below 130 percent of  
20 the federal poverty level by extending categorical  
21 eligibility to this population, or significantly increase  
22 the asset cap level. We ask that we remove the shelter cap  
23 and that we eliminate permit disqualification for a felony  
24 drug conviction. It is difficult to explain to the public  
25 why we qualify individuals who (inaudible) for a felony drug

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1 action but we do not disqualify individuals convicted of  
2 rape or armed robbery or other serious offenses.

3 Allow the purchase of hot prepared meals at retail  
4 stores.

5 To ensure adequate benefits, we ask that we  
6 increase the minimum allotment from \$10 to at least \$25.

7 To simplify complex program rules, we would like  
8 to have a graduated medical deduction provided for all food  
9 stamp households based on household size. This would  
10 eliminate the burden on both state agencies and recipients  
11 of verifying medical expenses that are incurred by all  
12 households, not just our (inaudible.)

13 We ask that we simplify non-citizen eligibility



14 rules. Reinstate eligibility to legal immigrants.

15 And that (inaudible) consider savings in  
16 administrative costs in calculating cost neutrality for  
17 demonstration projects to encourage states to design and  
18 develop progressive Food Stamp Program strategies. Also  
19 allocate funding to states approved for demonstration  
20 projects designed to improve Food Stamp Program service  
21 delivery.

22 To promote healthy eating, we would like to see  
23 methods developed to increase the consumption of more fruits  
24 and vegetables by Food Stamp Program participants. We would  
25 like for the Food Stamp Program to develop campaigns to

28

1 encourage healthy eating and incentive programs for healthy  
2 food purchases.

3 And with a prominent emphasis on nutrition  
4 education in the Food Stamp Program, adequate funds need to  
5 be available so states do not have to rely on in-kind match.

6 In improving our federal and state partnerships,  
7 we would like to see an increase in the funding match for  
8 administration of the Food Stamp Program for states based on  
9 the state's increase of participating households. This will  
10 allow states to concurrently fund agency resources necessary  
11 to support the increasing caseloads.

12 We would like to see an increase in the percentage  
13 of federal match to states for technology support to  
14 encourage the development of more up-to-date and  
15 sophisticated technologies.

16 And one last thing the Food Stamp Program would

17 like to see, is we would like a national database, a  
18 participation database so that states can prevent  
19 duplication from one state to another consistent with the  
20 (inaudible.)

21 In closing, the South Carolina Department of  
22 Social Services (inaudible) would like to acknowledge FNS at  
23 the regional and the national levels for their consistent  
24 responsiveness to our Food Stamp Program needs and their  
25 supportive attitude and our partnership. We greatly

29

1 appreciate their competent guidance. Thank you.

2 MR. CHARLES WINGARD: Good afternoon. My name is  
3 Charles Wingard. I'm a vegetable farmer from Lexington  
4 County. I work with my family. We raise and ship and  
5 process about 5,000 acres of fresh vegetables a year over in  
6 Pelion, South Carolina.

7 And to the lady from Harvest Hope -- where is she  
8 at? I'm proud to say that I see a Harvest Hope truck come  
9 to our facility about once a week, I believe, and hope it  
10 continues to come.

11 I want to thank you all for coming to Columbia.  
12 This is awfully important, and I want to talk to you this  
13 afternoon just a little bit about the School Fruit and  
14 Vegetable Snack Program. That is, of course, a part of the  
15 2002 Farm Bill. It created a pilot program in four states,  
16 with 25 schools each, and seven schools and one Indian  
17 reservation. It's a very successful pilot program. Those  
18 107 schools began to offer free fruits and vegetables to  
19 children throughout the school day in high schools, middle

20 schools and elementary schools, and they were able to give  
21 those kids fresh fruits and vegetables through very creative  
22 concepts using kiosks, vending machines.

23 In 2004 that program was expanded to include four  
24 more states and two more Indian reservations, and it was  
25 established as a permanent part of the Child Nutrition WIC

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1 Reauthorization Act.

2 Today, I think something just happened in the last  
3 couple of weeks. The president signed a bill today; it's in  
4 14 states with 25 schools each, and I think still just three  
5 Indian tribes. I'm not sure about that, but there's about  
6 370 U.S. public schools participating in this today out of a  
7 possible 100,000, and it has current annual expenditure of  
8 about 13 million right now, about a million dollars per  
9 state.

10 The schools that participate in this program are  
11 reporting that as their students ate fresh fruits and  
12 vegetables, they ate more of them, and they ate less  
13 high-calorie, high-fat vending options, otherwise known as  
14 junk food. They ate more healthy foods during the school  
15 lunch program; they had better attention spans and were less  
16 hungry throughout the day. They felt better and visited the  
17 nurse less often, and the schools had fewer discipline  
18 problems.

19 Let me read just a few comments from a few people  
20 involved in that program. A student from North Elementary  
21 in Michigan says, I eat more fruits and vegetables at home  
22 now, too. And a parent, also from a middle school in

23 Michigan, says it makes her smile when she sees her kids  
24 eating celery sticks. Prior to this her daughter would  
25 never have touched them, thank you for providing those

31

1 healthy foods for our children. Parents really do  
2 appreciate it.

3 And a health education director, also from a  
4 middle school somewhere up in Michigan, says that school  
5 officials have heard students in the hallway talking, and  
6 some students get excited now about kiwis. So it is a very  
7 successful program. It's showing positive results. It's  
8 definitely increasing our kids' consumption of fruits and  
9 vegetables.

10 On average, children today eat less than  
11 50 percent of the daily amount of fresh fruits and  
12 vegetables recommended by the U.S. Dietary Guidelines. I  
13 believe that's those pyramids right behind you.

14 It's decreased the consumption of junk food. A  
15 study of the Norway Pilot Program and of the U.S. Pilot  
16 Program, in 2002 and 2003, shows that students spent less  
17 money on sodas, chips and candies when fresh fruits and  
18 vegetables were available in their schools. And the  
19 participating schools have observed immediate positive  
20 changes in behavior.

21 This program helps offset -- and, Ms. Coler, I was  
22 glad to hear you mention in your comments -- this program  
23 helps offset many diet-related health problems. The four  
24 big diet-related health problems are diabetes, stroke, heart  
25 disease and cancer. We're only talking about a pound, a

1 pound and a half of fruits and vegetables a day for the  
2 kids, and maybe two pounds for us. Really, we're talking  
3 about an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure here.

4 I encourage you and urge you and ask you to expand  
5 this program from 14 states to 50 states, hopefully. I know  
6 it's a big step. I know we're talking about money. I know  
7 you have budgetary constraints. I urge you to do it  
8 incrementally, if you will. That's what's been done in the  
9 past and it seems to work very well. And I would encourage  
10 you to explore state or local cost-sharing programs.

11 I also want to touch base with you just a little  
12 bit about the Department of Defense Fresh Program for  
13 schools. This has been a very cost-effective mechanism to  
14 get fresh fruits and vegetables into school meals. We're  
15 not talking about the snacks now, we're talking about the  
16 meals at lunch and breakfast.

17 The schools, quite simply, are using the Defense  
18 Department's purchasing power and network to get the  
19 quantities of fruits and vegetables they need. It includes  
20 a diverse network of produce suppliers with over 300 produce  
21 items currently available. And not only are they currently  
22 available, but they are available when the schools need them  
23 and where they need them, and then the large quantities that  
24 they would need.

25 And special emphasis in this program is given to

1 locally grown produce and to small suppliers. It's a good  
2 program, it's working very well, and if there's any way you  
3 can increase the funding there, I would encourage you to do  
4 so.

5 I've heard from other USD programs, or heard about  
6 other USD programs here -- and, by the way, the gentleman  
7 about the Seniors Farmers Market, it's a big hit in  
8 Lexington County. I've heard more about that just through  
9 town, over in Lexington County, than any other program from  
10 the general public, than any other program from the USDA.  
11 You wouldn't believe those people over there asking about  
12 that. I didn't know they were that old.

13 I know these other programs are necessary and  
14 vital, but this Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program and  
15 Department of Defense Program for schools is a very good  
16 program. It is a very proactive program.

17 Literally, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound  
18 of cure. This is a place where we can nip it in the bud.  
19 This country spends an astronomical amount of money on  
20 diet-related health care problems. Like I said, diabetes,  
21 stroke, heart disease, cancer, they are caused by obesity,  
22 high blood pressure and high cholesterol, which is caused by  
23 poor nutrition.

24 This country -- or let me back up. In my research  
25 I could find data no later than 1999. This country spent in

1 1999 well over \$82 billion on those four diseases, and I'm  
2 sure, I see what my paycheck looks like on the little line  
3 that says "insurance." I'm sure that 82 billion has gone up

4 significantly in the last six years.

5           South Carolina leads or is near the top in the  
6 United States in many of these health care costs or these  
7 health care problems for both adults and adolescents. It  
8 will take a long-term commitment to reverse these trends and  
9 to teach our young people how to eat.

10           The statistics will not turn around quickly, but  
11 they will turn around with good nutritional habits. And  
12 considering that South Carolina is at or near the top in  
13 many of these health care problems, and considering that  
14 South Carolina, or considering that in the past decade, in  
15 the United States, the number of obese and overweight  
16 children has doubled, the time is right for a healthy food  
17 environment that promotes the increased consumption of  
18 fruits and vegetables.

19           The one thought I want to leave with you -- and I  
20 do appreciate you being here. I regret that Undersecretary  
21 Boss couldn't be here. I met him a while back, and a very,  
22 very sharp individual. But the one thought I want to leave  
23 with you is that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of  
24 cure, and we have an opportunity here and we need to seize  
25 on it more to really nip it in the bud. Thank you.

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1           MR. RUSTY MARSH: My name is Rusty Marsh. I'm the  
2 South Carolina Administrator of the Golden Harvest Food Bank  
3 in Aiken, South Carolina. I want to thank you for being  
4 here, particularly that you've come here to a food bank, and  
5 how important your program is and the good work you do.  
6 You're to be commended.

7 I came to the food bank in May of '94, so I've got  
8 ten-plus years, so I guess you would call me an old-timer.  
9 But when I first came to the food bank, it was interesting.  
10 I heard stories about food banking and about how Mike Furman  
11 started the food bank in 1982. It was known as the Cookie  
12 Food Bank because we were close to residential banking,  
13 which became Keebler, and then it was bought out by Murray  
14 Biscuit.

15 But we've come a long way in food banking. We're  
16 not known as the cookie food bank anymore. In fact, a  
17 little shopping list in Aiken, South Carolina has anywhere  
18 from eight to ten pages of shopping items on the shopping  
19 list.

20 You know, we're truly blessed in this nation.  
21 Most of us get up and we roll out of bed and we go into our  
22 kitchen, we prepare ourselves a meal, then we get on fine  
23 clothes and we get into our cars and go to work.

24 Now, I said that's most. For a lot of them that's  
25 not the picture, and that is the people that are standing in

36

1 the gap at the food bank.

2 I also work with the Aiken Barnwell Homeless  
3 Coalition, and we're concerned about those people, as I know  
4 you are.

5 That being said, I came to the food bank in  
6 September of 2002, at the Aiken branch. We service six  
7 counties on South Carolina's site. The last three years of  
8 distribution has just been amazing. We've gone from 1.6  
9 million pounds to 1.7 million pounds. Last year it was 1.8



10 million pounds. The need is so great out there. USDA is  
11 vital. We need it even to be stronger.

12 We get donations locally, nationally, but  
13 donations are down. Our national association, America's  
14 Second Harvest, that you probably heard about during  
15 Katrina, during Katrina, in the first two weeks of that  
16 disaster -- and that was truly a national disaster,  
17 something like we've never seen before -- they shipped 7  
18 million pounds of food in the first two weeks -- (inaudible)  
19 that was 238 tractor-trailer loads of food.

20 Now, as a food banker I'm a little concerned  
21 because that was food that would normally come to food  
22 banks, such as Denise Holland's Harvest Hope, mine down in  
23 Aiken. We have Mauldin, we have Charleston, up in  
24 Asheville. We're scattered all around, and we're doing a  
25 good job, but we need help. We're asking ourselves right

37

1 now, with the disasters that are going on, with the need  
2 going up, with there being so many people that are out of  
3 jobs, we're asking ourselves what are we going to do. Well,  
4 we don't throw up our hands. We look creatively at what  
5 we're doing and how we can do it better, and I'm sure that's  
6 the same thing that you do.

7 We don't want to depend on government food at the  
8 Aiken Golden Harvest Food Bank, but, quite frankly, we get  
9 donations for 50 percent of what we distribute is USDA food.  
10 Now, I tell people we're not a government program, but we  
11 can't do without you. The people who we serve can't do  
12 without you.

13           I have some statistics here, and I'm not going to  
14 bore you with them because they go from families served in  
15 fiscal year 2002-2003, from 32,035 families to, 2003-2004,  
16 41,831 families. You can look at the statistics. I'll put  
17 it in your box, but the need is growing.

18           Now, we have looked creatively at this and we've  
19 decided that the food bank is to start a Purchase Food  
20 Program. You know, agencies that come to us, and they rely  
21 on our shared maintenance, just a minimum amount of money,  
22 because we have the freezers, we have the coolers, we have  
23 the forklifts, we have the warehouse. They rely on us to  
24 run their food programs. If it wasn't for us, they would be  
25 going to the grocery stores, they would be going to Fred's

38

1 Discount or Sam's or somewhere to be getting their food. We  
2 started a Purchase Food Program because we have to have the  
3 food.

4           I look at my shelves in my warehouse and I say, I  
5 cannot let those go down. Now, when they go down I start  
6 praying, but, you know, we need supplemental sources of food  
7 coming in, so we went out and we started looking at it  
8 creatively and we started a Purchase Food Program.

9           And overall our goals have changed. We're not a  
10 program just to ship out pounds to distribute; that's not  
11 where we're at. We are looking at, our goal would be to  
12 improve the nutrition, the nutritional value of what people  
13 are getting from this. This actually improves their health.  
14 This actually -- improved health actually improves the  
15 society all over.

16 But not only that, we're improving stability for  
17 people who are unstable. Most of us, when we go home in the  
18 afternoon, we know where our next meal is coming from. Our  
19 children, when they come home from school, they know where  
20 their next meal is coming from. They've got it in the  
21 cupboard or it's available to them, or, hey, we can always  
22 go to McDonald's. My wife works, I work, so it's McDonald's  
23 in the afternoon.

24 But, you know, we are here, not only as a food  
25 bank to give a hand-out. It's not a program where you just

39

1 hand out stuff. We're actually in a program where you take  
2 the hand and you lift them up. You give them a hand up. We  
3 want them to feel good when they come to one of our  
4 emergency food pantries and receive food. We want to give  
5 them a good product.

6 Now, we deal with donated product, and that's  
7 good, because if we didn't get donated product, it would  
8 probably end up in a dumpster somewhere. We get food that  
9 has a date on it. We know exactly how far it will go.  
10 We're trained in food-handling, and we actually salvage that  
11 food. We're doing everything that we can do to serve those  
12 that are in need, but we need your help, and that's why I'm  
13 here today.

14 I'm just saying we need your help. We can't let  
15 these people who depend on us, who live in an unstable  
16 environment, to be without the necessities of life. We are  
17 not talking about a newer improved car. Jobs are out of the  
18 question. If you have a job, you better keep it because

19 jobs are hard to find. These people are not going to be  
20 able to bring themselves up unless somebody takes them by  
21 the hand and shows them a better way, gives them the food  
22 that they need until they can get on their feet, get a job,  
23 and then they can do it for themselves.

24 That is what we are going to do. That's what the  
25 food bank is going to do, and we'll do it with your help.

40

1 Thank you for your time.

2 MS. LYNDA CHRISTISON: I'm Lynda Christison. I'm  
3 the Director of the Council on Aging for Lexington County.  
4 On behalf of all of us, thank you for coming. Welcome to  
5 South Carolina. This is our first, really, fall day so it's  
6 really nice.

7 I'm here to talk about the food programs and USDA  
8 on behalf of local, very local community-based service  
9 providers. We're part of Larry's network and we're part of  
10 the Lexington County network that makes sure people get fed.  
11 We issue the farmers market vouchers. We hand out the  
12 commodities that Denise and her people pack up every month.

13 These programs are crucial and they cannot be cut.  
14 It is just -- I mean, to me it is absolutely criminal that  
15 anybody would consider cutting food and cutting taxes. That  
16 is insane. It costs more in the long run to not feed  
17 people, so what everybody said here I say ditto and then  
18 some.

19 We have been distributing the Seniors Farmers  
20 Market vouchers. We helped recruit the farmers to  
21 participate in the program. We give out information to the

22 seniors on where they can go to shop with their vouchers.  
 23 We transport them to get this food. We help them get it  
 24 back home again. We provide them with educational  
 25 information on how to use it. And it makes a difference.

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1 We also provide home-delivered meals at seven  
 2 senior centers. And there's been some recent preliminary  
 3 research in South Carolina that connects the value of the  
 4 meals to hospital and nursing home stays and emergency room  
 5 usage. What it is showing is that seniors who get three or  
 6 more home-delivered meals a day have a tremendously reduced  
 7 rate of usage of medical programs.

8 Now, it costs a whole lot more to pay the Medicaid  
 9 bill at the hospital than it costs to provide the vouchers,  
 10 the commodities and home-delivered meals. I pay \$2.05 in  
 11 food costs for every senior that I serve. That's a lot less  
 12 money, if you're paying out 10, 12 dollars a week, to feed  
 13 somebody than it is to put them in a nursing home. I think  
 14 that's something that people really need to start to take a  
 15 look at because I think we're paying at the wrong end of the  
 16 spectrum.

17 I mean, we issue 900 to 1,000 farmers market  
 18 vouchers a year. In 2004 we ran out of vouchers in our  
 19 county. It is truly, probably, the most well-known program  
 20 in the county. And we had waiting lists with a couple  
 21 hundred people on them.

22 In 2005, we made a hard decision and we said we  
 23 could only issue one set of vouchers per household. Well,  
 24 that's not really fair because that program is designed on a

25 per-person basis. And that's important. I mean, whether

42

1 you're married, whether you're living and you have your  
2 sister living with and your husband as well, it's not fair  
3 for three people to get the same amount of fruits and  
4 vegetables as one person. Nutritionally it doesn't make  
5 sense, but it was the only way we could spread that program  
6 as far as we could spread it. So on behalf of all the  
7 seniors in South Carolina, please increase that program, do  
8 not cut it.

9           The same is true for the Commodities Program.  
10 That 25-pound box -- and Lord knows we've lugged a lot of  
11 them. Those boxes for some people make a difference in  
12 whether or not they are able to make their dollars stretch  
13 every month.

14           We get an allotment of how many we can issue in  
15 Lexington County to our seniors, and we get, you know,  
16 between 95 and 100 folks on that program. Well, in the  
17 two-month period, in August and September, we increased the  
18 number of people getting daily meals from us by 44 people.  
19 For a small local program, that is a lot of folks. That's  
20 \$22,000 in meal costs that I have to come up with to feed  
21 those people for a year.

22           A lot of those people also want to be on the  
23 Commodities Program. A lot of those people will also want  
24 to be part of the Farmers Market Voucher Program this  
25 spring. I have no way to do that, because we have a limit

1 in terms of how many vouchers we can get in Lexington  
2 County.

3 And Lexington County is perceived as being one of  
4 the wealthiest counties in South Carolina. That's because  
5 we have great services, we have a lot of folks that choose  
6 to retire there, the people that come into the county that  
7 retire are quite wealthy. Many of them, not all of them,  
8 but many of them.

9 On the other hand, the people that are aging in  
10 place, the people that are native to South Carolina, native  
11 to Lexington County, or who moved here years and years ago,  
12 are not wealthy. Many of them are well below the poverty  
13 level, many of them are maybe just a little bit above the  
14 poverty level. Those people have, this year, will be  
15 choosing, without a doubt, between eating, medication and  
16 heating their homes.

17 We are already getting numerous requests from  
18 people who want help getting a small space heater so they  
19 can heat one room in their house and close off the rest of  
20 it. That's a crime.

21 A lot of the houses are not great. A lot of them  
22 are not well insulated. There's so much more that these  
23 programs can do on a preventive level that is so, so  
24 terribly important.

25 I would also like to bring up one other point on

1 behalf of all the local providers. We get no administrative

2 dollars, none. These programs, we do them because they  
3 matter to our people. But do you know what, we can't do  
4 everything. We are inundated, we are totally and completely  
5 inundated.

6 Volunteers are wonderful. We couldn't exist  
7 without volunteers, but they can only do so much. And the  
8 more complicated the forms become, the more complicated the  
9 technology, the greater the requirements, the harder it is  
10 for us to implement these programs.

11 There are councils on aging in this state that  
12 will not do the Farmers Market Voucher Program because they  
13 cannot afford the staff time. It basically kills a couple  
14 of weeks of staff time for us, plus all of the getting  
15 people to market and everything else. That means that we  
16 fall way behind on our other responsibilities.

17 We are funded by the Older Americans Act, which  
18 means we have to meet all the paperwork requirements, we  
19 have to comply with HIPAA. We have to do all those things.  
20 If you don't put administrative dollars into some of these  
21 programs and keep asking us to do them, at some point none  
22 of us are going to be able to do them, not the churches, not  
23 anybody, because it's just really a burden.

24 I would say that we are the experts at doing less  
25 with, doing more with less, and we've about bottomed out.

45

1 A case in point is Medicare Part B. Anything you  
2 look at says go to your local aging office, go to your  
3 council on aging, go to your local senior center. Guess who  
4 doesn't have the money to pay their staff to deal the



5 Medicare Part D? We don't, but we are fielding tons and  
6 tons and tons of calls.

7           We have people coming to us and saying, Mr. and  
8 Ms. Smith have Alzheimer's and they need somebody to help  
9 them pick out what plan they want. We have insurance agents  
10 at our doors wanting us to put them in touch with seniors,  
11 which we don't, so if any of you are insurance agents,  
12 forget it.

13           But the point is, none of these things, not the  
14 Commodities Program, not the Food Stamp Program, which we  
15 also help people access, not the Farmers Market Voucher  
16 Program, nothing that comes down the pike comes with  
17 administrative dollars for the local agencies, that are the  
18 gateway for getting people into these programs.

19           Now, we believe in these programs. We work hard  
20 to try and get our folks into these programs. We bend over  
21 backwards to accomplish it. We get a lot of help from the  
22 community, but there is only so much. So please, as you do  
23 this, please get the increase that people need to have the  
24 nutrition, to keep their health up, for all these programs,  
25 whether they are for kids or for seniors or for anybody. It

46

1 is the best prevention we've got. But also please remember  
2 that administrative costs are there. They don't stop when  
3 that program leaves Washington, D.C. They certainly don't  
4 stop when it leaves the state offices in Columbia, which  
5 also need administrative dollars because they don't have  
6 anywhere near enough either. We need help to be able to do  
7 these programs and do them well.

8                   Please keep them simple. In South Carolina, as  
9 well as in a lot of other places, how we provide our  
10 programs varies from community to community.  
11                   I've got seven senior centers. None of them run  
12 the same. They all do the same paperwork, but none of them  
13 run the same because the population is different in each  
14 community. And in an urban area like downtown Lexington or  
15 West Columbia, you get a lot of people who are highly  
16 literate, but you go out to some of the small more rural  
17 communities, a lot of people are functionally illiterate. I  
18 can't give them a piece of paper that says where they can go  
19 to get fruits and vegetables from Mr. Wingard. I have to  
20 have somebody tell them or show them, because they can't  
21 read. These are people who went to World War II. They  
22 dropped out of school. They deserve better, so please do  
23 your best. Thank you.  
24                   MR. FRED BROUGHTON: Good afternoon, my name is  
25 Fred Broughton, South Carolina Department of Agriculture.

47

1                   I did not particularly plan to speak, but then I  
2 got here I just couldn't pass up the stage time. I wanted  
3 to thank you for coming also, and particularly  
4 Undersecretary Coler, good to see you again.  
5                   I had an occasion to chat briefly with Deputy  
6 Undersecretary Coler last month at the National Association  
7 of Farmers Market, and Secretary Coler and I had a few words  
8 that I wanted to point out to her, that I think sort of a  
9 point, sort of a tell the story about some of the issues  
10 that came up here today, because we, you know, we have a lot

11 of people who can benefit from these programs, but I think I  
12 reflect on something that was said at that conference during  
13 Secretary Coler, that we're going to have to figure out some  
14 way to be creative because it appears that the funding is  
15 not in keeping with the needs of the people.

16 Now, several people talked about there are needs  
17 for additional funds, and they've also talked about how we  
18 should be spending money for nutritional purposes versus the  
19 treatment of illnesses that people acquire. I believe I read  
20 recently that the government spent over \$100 billion a year  
21 for medical expenses, and some years ago it was nearly 40  
22 percent of the USDA budget went into food and nutrition, but  
23 how can we get those resources to where it could best serve  
24 those individuals who are nutritionally at risk?

25 Now, I would suspect that there needs to be some,

48

1 maybe some additional flexibility in the programs so that  
2 the local people can make some adjustments where needed. As  
3 the lady from Lexington talked about, even within a given  
4 county there are different needs, so the one-size-fits-all  
5 for the nation does not necessarily work even in this  
6 program.

7 In South Carolina there is a great need for the  
8 WIC and the Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program. The  
9 gentleman from Lexington talked about how he didn't realize  
10 there were that many old people in Lexington. Mr. Wingard,  
11 we aren't any more older than we think we are, but those  
12 individuals still have needs.

13 I've had the opportunity of also serving on the

14 board of directors for the Orangeburg County Council on  
15 Aging, so I'm kind of familiar with some of the challenges  
16 that many of these people face in Lexington. You've got two  
17 dollars and change to feed, to provide a meal for people in  
18 Orangeburg. We had one dollar and some change, so there are  
19 all kind of needs. We've got to figure out how we could  
20 better utilize the resources here, as I said earlier.

21 Now, I have been involved with the Seniors Market,  
22 Seniors Nutrition Market and the WIC. Those programs are  
23 serving a critical need in many communities in South  
24 Carolina. However, I would like to recommend that  
25 education, nutrition education be made part of these

49

1 programs in the future.

2 I know you talk about the Seniors Program going  
3 from discretionary funds to statutory funds. When that  
4 happened, I think we also need, it would also be advisable  
5 for the USDA to write in the Farm Bill or get Congress to  
6 write in the Farm Bill that nutrition education is critical  
7 for both WIC and the Senior Program, even if we've got to  
8 put the resources in it to make sure that we get the  
9 nutrition education.

10 There are people who, some school of thought have  
11 it that could not maximize the use of these checks because  
12 they may not necessarily know how to prepare the vegetables.  
13 So in that case we're ending up paying that medical bill  
14 when we could have invested, make a small investment on the  
15 front end to help those individuals.

16 So with that I would like to suggest that the Farm

17 Bill include resources for nutrition education and, wherever  
18 practical, let's see that funds go to provide fresh fruits  
19 and vegetables for those individuals with nutrition at risk.

20 Thank you very much for your time.

21 MS. DENISE HOLLAND: I'm Denise Holland. I'm with  
22 the Harvest Hope Food Bank here. We're very sorry that you  
23 were delayed getting here.

24 One closing remark, and I know it's getting late.  
25 As you can see, your report recently released says that

50

1 South Carolina went from fifth in the nation suffering from  
2 food insecurity with hunger to number two in the nation of  
3 suffering with food insecurity and hunger. All of us, there  
4 are -- we are all community partners here. Every one who  
5 spoke, the food bank has a relationship with.

6 Out on the other end of this building, I just  
7 walked outside, our emergency food pantry, the line is out  
8 the door and in the parking lot.

9 We take it seriously. We are very passionate.  
10 Our work is just not work; it's really a mission. It all  
11 becomes a very personal mission on our part, and we see it  
12 every day, that hunger.

13 We hope that if anything from South Carolina you  
14 take away from this is that everything that you do for USDA  
15 is terribly important to us. We hate to be standing here  
16 begging for more, but it's the reality.

17 I thank you for what you've done for us and for  
18 being here and coming to Columbia, South Carolina, to hear  
19 us out. Thanks very much.

20 MS. COLER: We do have plenty of  
21 time. If there is anyone who didn't have  
22 the opportunity to sign up and would like  
23 to make some comments, please feel free to  
24 do so.  
25 Please introduce yourself.

51

1 REVEREND J. J. DIAZ: I'm Reverend Diaz, J. J. Diaz.  
2 I'm Mexican but I'm a U. S. citizen.  
3 I've been working here in South Carolina since  
4 '89, 1989 with immigrants. I have under my care 20  
5 families. I'd like to say that out of those 20 families, no  
6 one needs anything. I'm proud of them, and I challenge  
7 everybody to teach others how to survive by themselves and  
8 help others. That's the best thing.  
9 At the same time, I congratulate you, you guys by  
10 doing this, helping others.  
11 I would like to know from anyone in this place how  
12 deep is the need to have immigrants. We have been talking  
13 about USA citizens, but how deep is the need for immigrants,  
14 and in which fashion or way have been accomplished.  
15 I got tired of going to Social Services, taking  
16 Hispanics. It's hard, the process is hard. They are not  
17 used to it. I was not used to it. I'm not familiar with  
18 the system, so we just ended going to Social Services. It's  
19 not that they are not prepared, but we were not. They were  
20 not ready for internationals. The paperwork was not  
21 available. And I'm sure that today it's different. It was  
22 many years ago.

23 And I would like to know, in your experience, how  
24 much progress have been done in your agency in terms of  
25 helping the internationals.

52

1 With the Hispanics, as soon as they come into the  
2 community, it's not easy, it's just not easy. All of them  
3 are so different. Cubans, the paperwork is different in the  
4 immigration. Mexicans, different. From Central America,  
5 different; from South America, different. From India or  
6 China, totally different. So for you guys working with  
7 internationals, it's a mess, and I guess you pray, Please  
8 don't send me an international.

9 As soon as they come to the community, if they are  
10 in my hands I take care of them, because they can take care  
11 of themselves. They are not asking for anything. They just  
12 need someone to take them by the hand, to teach them how to  
13 work, where to live.

14 But first they need, as soon as they come, of  
15 course is food. Of course they need to eat something. And  
16 it would be good to help, I mean, take them to some place  
17 like this. They are just coming; they don't have papers or  
18 they have papers, but not the papers you want. They have a  
19 passport and the visa and something else, but they don't  
20 have social security number. And a lot of places, if you  
21 don't have a social security number, you are not, you are  
22 nobody.

23 Then after the number -- by the way, you need to  
24 wait, you need to apply and wait sometimes a day, sometimes  
25 two months. Once you have your social security number, you

1 need your ID. So how can you live in the United States if  
2 you cannot have all those things? You cannot rent an  
3 apartment, but you need to send your kids to school the same  
4 day they come. If not, you're against the law. So if you  
5 send your kids to school, you need an address, so usually  
6 they ask for, friends ask for an address.

7 All those things are not very well coordinated  
8 among the authorities, and it's a mess, I know. It's a  
9 headache for everybody.

10 I have five (inaudible). I have wrestled with  
11 some of them. Finally we get the things we want. It's not  
12 that they are better, or I'm better than -- but finally the  
13 human heart is there and either I break or they break.

14 So if you, as USDA and some other, the house and  
15 education, Social Services, and if the people can come  
16 together and say let's make simple, things simple for  
17 internationals.

18 When Cubans are coming to the United States, if  
19 they're coming to Florida, or Miami, that's heaven. That's  
20 a paradise for them. If they come to South Carolina, we are  
21 kind of ready, but not really. Coming to Florida, they have  
22 food stamps immediately, immediately, but not here. Maybe  
23 now, I don't know. It's hard. You need all those things,  
24 even for transportation.

25 One thing that I am fighting -- I'm nobody in



1 South Carolina. Who is a reverend? Nobody. But I'm  
2 fighting, I'm pushing. I'm recommending that this state  
3 needs a national ID, a national ID. Immigrants, they don't  
4 need to have the same ID you have if they are not citizens  
5 or they are not residents. You can get all the services  
6 that USDA have because they don't have a driver's license.  
7 A driver's license is the only document human beings in the  
8 USA have to identify themselves?

9           If you want to transport one foot or two feet from  
10 where you are, you need a bicycle or you do it by yourself,  
11 by train, whatever. You don't need a driver's license to  
12 transport yourself, but you need it because then with a  
13 driver's license you can do anything. You just can do  
14 anything.

15           I hope that in the future things will be easier,  
16 like some of you have been asking, but just make it simple.

17           With the Latinos I apply the rule of the Bible.  
18 Some people get offended with that nowadays, but if they  
19 don't work, don't eat. I'm so cruel. And if they are  
20 hungry we teach them where to find a place to work. We are  
21 not giving away money. But if they're in my hands, I say  
22 give me a Hispanic, any Hispanic, hard-working Hispanic, in  
23 two months they are totally independent, in two months, with  
24 his own car -- of course making payments -- his own  
25 apartment, his work, his papers is straight. In two months,

55

1 hard-working Hispanics.

2           They're in the streets begging for nothing, so I  
3 would go an extra mile in telling them where to go, with

4    whi ch agenci es.

5                   But you guys in USDA, go ahead and do what you're  
6   doing, you're great. We are still, we are still angry  
7   sometimes and there is a lot of people that go home with no  
8   food.

9                   I feel so sorry for so many people in the streets  
10   with no place to go. They stay sometimes in the parking lot  
11   in our church, and some of the members of my church are  
12   scaring them. I say, Just let them stay, they are not doing  
13   any harm. I don't want to make this problem bigger, but  
14   just let them stay.

15                  I ask them, Please don't trash, please don't --  
16   some of them say, Well, as long as I'm here nobody will be  
17   here except me, so that's fine. If one person eats there,  
18   no one will come to their territory, and they preserve our  
19   place.

20                  But we just pray that the United States open the  
21   doors or teach them how to work, how to -- instead of just  
22   begging for one piece of rice, teach them, as the Chinese  
23   say, how to sow instead of begging for rice.

24                  Thank you very much. Did I say who I am? Yes.

25                  MS. KATE COLER: You can repeat it.

56

1                  REVERENCE J. J. DIAZ: I'm Jose Juan Di as. I work  
2   with the Social Reform Presbyterian Church. I'm a member of  
3   several agencies in the state. Thank you.

4                  MS. KATE COLER: Is there anyone else?

5                  MS. KITTY SHALLER: Good afternoon. My name is  
6   Kitty Shaller. I'm the Executive Di rector of Second Harvest

7 Food Bank in Asheville, North Carolina, and I want to make  
8 sure that all the South Carolinians have had their say.

9 I wasn't prepared to speak. Some of you may know  
10 that the part of North Carolina that we come from is closer  
11 to five other capitals besides our own.

12 I've been in food banking for 23 years. It is my  
13 pleasure, it is my passion, and I think for all of us who  
14 are involved in feeding people, you all too, it is our  
15 pleasure and our passion to be able to help people who are  
16 in need, and I celebrate your being here this afternoon to  
17 hear our comments.

18 When I think about food banking, it does make me  
19 proud. Over these 23 years, America's Second Harvest Food  
20 Bank has grown and grown, and we do an amazing amount of  
21 work among needy people across the United States.

22 I know lots of people -- some of them are my own  
23 board of directors -- who think this is the way to help  
24 people in need; the charitable efforts will solve all the  
25 problems. It's not so. It's a good thing we do. It's a

57

1 particularly good thing that we do, that we engage the  
2 public in a way that some, for some is the only way they  
3 will engage.

4 But we would be crazy not to credit the food  
5 programs that you bring to these United States with a huge  
6 amount of import for what you accomplish, and we need to get  
7 that message out. I want to encourage that that be a  
8 greater part of what you do, to blow your own horns.

9 We in food banking get what is available, not

10 necessarily what we need, and we need from you what people  
 11 really need. And we will augment that with industry  
 12 donations, food donations that come from the community so we  
 13 can spread them among the hundreds and hundreds of agencies  
 14 that we work with.

15 In North Carolina, in the western part of North  
 16 Carolina in the mountains, we have particular issues of  
 17 rural poverty that are very difficult to get to, very  
 18 difficult to minister to. It's a bit difficult to attract  
 19 people, even to a good program like food stamps. Mountain  
 20 pride gets in the way. Help us sell this program to the  
 21 very people who need it most.

22 And one reason they are not drawn to it is the  
 23 stigma that remains. Help us across the United States to  
 24 begin to break down that stigma. It's so important.

25 I want to say a word about fraud, and I say this

58

1 particularly because I had need to call a legislator, in  
 2 these last couple weeks, about the budget in the nation  
 3 coming out of the House. And when I heard that cuts were  
 4 being proposed from the House Agriculture Committee,  
 5 necessary to deal with the rampant fraud from the Food Stamp  
 6 Program, I know there's not rampant fraud from the Food  
 7 Stamp Program. It gives me particular pain to hear that  
 8 from a legislator, but I know that that is the sense that  
 9 people have in our communities too. Help us to dispel that.  
 10 It just isn't so.

11 I am reminded, when we did our hunger study with  
 12 client, doing client interviews, of a woman I spoke with in

13 Reepsville, North Carolina, a sweet elderly 78-year-old  
 14 woman. And as we finished our survey, one of the questions  
 15 said, Have you ever applied for food stamps? She said yes.  
 16 I said, Do you receive food stamps? Yes. How much do you  
 17 receive? Ten dollars a month. I finished the survey,  
 18 closed the book and I said, Ms. Miller, is it really worth  
 19 your while to apply for food stamps when you receive ten  
 20 dollars a month? And she said, Oh no, of course it's not.  
 21 And I said, Then why do you continue to do it? And she  
 22 said, My, dear, if I don't continue to do this, they are  
 23 going to forget about all of us out here.  
 24 To think that a woman of that age, with the  
 25 disability that she had, the transportation concerns that

59

1 she had, would continue to apply because she felt she needed  
 2 to be a voice for her people, it was pretty profound to me.  
 3 I want to say just a word or two about some of the  
 4 things that we are doing at our food bank and how much we  
 5 welcome your partnership, and I agree that we need much more  
 6 to be done with nutrition education. We're working to put  
 7 EBT cards in our farmers markets for everyone, for your use,  
 8 and partnering with another agency to do that, and also to  
 9 get good farm product, particularly locally grown farm  
 10 product, into our schools, because it's true that so much,  
 11 our children are just robbed of fresh fruits and vegetables,  
 12 and sometimes the worst offenders are our own school lunch  
 13 programs.  
 14 We do a Kids Cafe Program that feeds kids in  
 15 after-school programs. I know you've heard about that

16 across the country. Another thing that we're doing in  
17 Asheville is to put in the hands of kids, on Friday  
18 afternoon when they go home for the weekend to their  
19 families, a bag of groceries. We call it the Back-Pack  
20 Program. Those groceries are fruits and vegetables.  
21 Food banking is not equal across the country.  
22 Lots of times it has to do with food already in our areas.  
23 We don't have that much flat land where we are, so we don't  
24 build very many big food manufacturing plants, so we have  
25 small farms, in fact pretty tiny farms, but they produce

60

1 good produce. We're glad to get that in the hands of kids.  
2 We're also doing community distributions and kind  
3 of a Free Tailgate Market Program in 25 sites in nine  
4 counties, that brings people right to that site to receive  
5 fruits and vegetables.

6 Help us teach people how important zucchini is,  
7 and if you have any good eggplant recipes, we surely would  
8 like some.

9 Mention has already been made of what has happened  
10 with the natural disasters. The disasters will continue.  
11 We've had a pretty awful year this year, but these things  
12 will happen and the entire public consciousness is focused  
13 on them, and those big disasters take people away. We have  
14 a little disaster at the dinner table all the time, and  
15 we're grateful that you're helping us to do something about  
16 it. Thank you.

17 MS. BETSY PITCOCK: I had not planned to speak  
18 either, but since my North Carolina friend has spoken, my

19 name is Betsy Pitcock. I'm with the University of Tennessee  
 20 Extension, and for the last ten years I have been a part of  
 21 the Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program, and we feel very  
 22 fortunate to have that program in Tennessee. We're in 92  
 23 counties, and in those 92 counties we've seen all kinds of  
 24 wonderful things happen, from young children, in one  
 25 particular school, that had never -- six kindergarten

61

1 children who had never tasted a banana. And we think that  
 2 would be terrible, but they had never tasted a banana.

3 And we had teachers who came to us and said,  
 4 Please keep this program going. Even though we were  
 5 teaching about eating fruits and vegetables in that  
 6 classroom, we didn't know what else we had taught there.  
 7 And the stories go on and on.

8 I'm an area specialist, so I travel the state of  
 9 Tennessee doing people development and also working with  
 10 agents on the front line. And we support, Tennessee  
 11 Extension supports the funding, and we hope that that  
 12 funding in no way is ever going to be problematic for you,  
 13 because we see on those front lines how much good this is  
 14 doing for the people in Tennessee, so we hope that works  
 15 well. Thank you.

16 MS. YOLANDA KENNEDY: Good afternoon. My name is  
 17 Yolanda Kennedy and I am the Assistant Director for the WIC  
 18 Program here in South Carolina and the Coordinator for the  
 19 WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program

20 I, like the later two speakers, did not come to  
 21 speak today. I only came to listen. But after hearing the

22 comments, and very important and relevant ones, I should  
23 say, I just wanted to add my two cents, and I am speaking on  
24 behalf of the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program.

25 With the WIC Program making improvements in the

62

1 current food package to include the addition of fruits and  
2 vegetables, how will this affect the WIC Farmers Market  
3 Nutrition Program? I have asked this question to our  
4 regional staff in Atlanta as well as the national staff in  
5 Washington, and the answer that I have received from both  
6 is, We really don't know, and I really don't feel confident  
7 about that answer.

8 Although it is proposed that WIC adds fruits and  
9 vegetables to the food package, which is wonderful and well  
10 overdue, it is only at a maximum dollar value of about ten  
11 dollars per month per participant. This, of course, is not  
12 adequate. And I hope you noticed earlier that when I spoke  
13 about the food package, I only said the addition of fruit  
14 and vegetables and I did not use the word "fresh" to  
15 describe them. The word "fresh" is what the Farmers Market  
16 Nutrition Program is all about, providing locally grown  
17 fresh fruit and vegetables to the people we serve through  
18 our local farmers markets.

19 I would encourage you not to use the addition of  
20 fruits and vegetables to the WIC programs food package as a  
21 reason to eliminate the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition  
22 Program.

23 Currently, the WIC Farmers Market Program, from  
24 June through September this year, served approximately



25 19,000 participants. Our participants each year tell us how

63

1 much they love the program because it exposes their children  
2 to farmers markets and fresh fruits and vegetables, which is  
3 an experience that many of them would not otherwise get if  
4 not participating in this program.

5 Please use the revitalizing of the WIC Food  
6 Package as an opportunity to improve the Farmers Market  
7 Program and not as an excuse to eliminate such a beneficial  
8 and much needed program in this state.

9 MS. COLER: Anyone else?

10 Well, with that, I would just like to say  
11 thank you again for coming and  
12 participating on behalf of Don Arnette, our  
13 Regional Administrator; Jessica Shahin, who  
14 is our Associate Deputy Administrator for  
15 the Food Stamp Program. We just really do  
16 thank you.

17 And while I was listening to your  
18 comments it struck me that we really do  
19 rely on what happens on the ground, in the  
20 local and state areas, to come up with some  
21 good ideas. And one of the best, I think,  
22 that we've done on a national level started  
23 here in South Carolina and that is  
24 eligibility, the dual enrollment between  
25 the Food Stamp Program and those who are

1 participating in, or who are receiving  
2 social security insurance, disability  
3 insurance. And that's been just a great  
4 program that started in South Carolina and  
5 we're trying to roll that out across the  
6 nation because it really does help reach a  
7 population that is difficult to reach, and  
8 that is the low-income seniors who are  
9 eligible for food stamps who are not  
10 actively engaging in the program.

11 So forums like this help just remind  
12 us of wonderful partnerships and  
13 innovations and spur new ideas we can take  
14 forward as we not only go into the Farm  
15 Bill debate but just through regular course  
16 of action as well.

17 There is a lot of comments that were  
18 really helpful. Just so you know, some of  
19 them have been stated in other forums,  
20 which I think shows that there are some  
21 good ideas out there, that there is some  
22 consistency across the country.

23 There are also some new things I  
24 heard, which we really do appreciate.

25 One comment I'll touch on is the call

1 for a name change in the Food Stamp

2 Program. That's something that's been in  
3 the President's budget. It does require an  
4 act of Congress. We have gone through some  
5 public comment periods and we're doing  
6 focus groups, because we really do think  
7 that's an important step, and a fairly easy  
8 step to help remove some of the stigma from  
9 the program to help reach more people.

10 The State of Minnesota changed the  
11 name of their program. They call it the  
12 Food Support Program, and we know that  
13 their enrollment has gone up because people  
14 have not been hesitant to participate in  
15 that as they may have been to participate  
16 in the Food Stamp Program.

17 Two other quick points I'd just like  
18 to make. I think I've heard some comments  
19 about the disasters with Hurricane Katrina,  
20 Rita and Wilma, and certainly the food bank  
21 network across the country jumped right in.  
22 The latest number I heard was over 1700  
23 truckloads of food from existing  
24 inventories across the country were shipped  
25 to the region to provide immediate relief.

1 Our partnerships together, we were  
2 able to reach many, many people and enroll  
3 them in the Food Stamp Program. Over  
4 960,000 households were signed up on food

5 stamps as a direct result, and it wasn't  
6 just in that area. As people fled across  
7 the country, states like South Carolina,  
8 North Carolina, Tennessee, really did step  
9 up and were very welcoming and expedited a  
10 lot of those cases.

11 Comment about fraud: I couldn't  
12 agree more. We do spend a lot of time not  
13 only speaking about how the Food Stamp  
14 Program really is in a new era, with the  
15 highest payment accuracy rate. We have no  
16 more stamps. We are at 100 percent EBT,  
17 and the rate of fraud and abuse in this  
18 program are well within they've ever been.

19 And I think the work of the states  
20 has really paid off. As you know, Congress  
21 is looking at a lot of budget cuts, and the  
22 Food Stamp Program, I think, has fared very  
23 well so far in this debate because of the  
24 ability to demonstrate how it's an  
25 effectively run program, so we're pleased

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1 with that.

2 And I'll just make one more plug on a  
3 program that's not run out of the USDA,  
4 and, Lynn, with the Department on Aging, I  
5 know you probably are receiving a lot of  
6 seniors coming. I think everybody who  
7 works with seniors is probably aware of the

8 new Medicare drug discount card.  
9 Enrollment for all seniors, it started on  
10 the 15th of this month. There was an  
11 effort prior to this time to try to enroll  
12 low-income seniors. We've got a lot of  
13 cooperation with the Social Security  
14 Administration to try to reach people.  
15 They will be automatically assigned to a  
16 plan if they don't take that extra step.  
17 But it is complicated as is all  
18 insurance type of programs, but I think  
19 people who focus an hour on some of the  
20 materials that have been sent, or have a  
21 family discussion or work with neighbors,  
22 can really help people enroll in this  
23 program. It's going to save people a lot  
24 of money. It's going to be able to ensure  
25 that they get the medications they need.

68

1 It's something that is new, and with  
2 everything new there are challenges. But  
3 there are going to be TV shows and web  
4 programs and lots of material out to help  
5 those help seniors not only in community  
6 centers but within families and  
7 neighborhoods.  
8 Because this is an important benefit,  
9 I think the fact that there are so many  
10 plans available to people is bringing the

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11 cost down, which will only enhance the  
12 benefit for seniors, so I just wanted to  
13 make you all aware of that, that there are  
14 materials if you look on the web site.  
15 CMS, the Center for Medicaid and  
16 Medicare has 7,000 operators standing by to  
17 receive phone calls through their 1-800  
18 number to help people.  
19 It is a challenge, but I think if we  
20 all put some effort into helping seniors  
21 sign up for that, the benefits in the long  
22 run will really, really pay off.  
23 So again, thank you for all of your  
24 comments on these programs. Some that  
25 aren't specifically related to the Farm

69

1 Bill, the comments are very helpful because  
2 these programs all do interact, and  
3 together your efforts on the local and  
4 state level make a difference in people's  
5 lives, and these programs can help support  
6 that, so thank you again very much.

7 (The hearing was concluded at 1:50 p.m.)  
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1 CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

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3 I, Janet L. LeVeque, Registered Professional  
4 Reporter and Notary Public for the State of South Carolina  
5 at Large, do hereby certify that the foregoing transcript is  
6 a true, accurate, and complete record.

7 I further certify that I am neither related to nor  
8 counsel for any party to the cause pending or interested in  
9 the events thereof.

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November 28, 2005

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Janet L. LeVeque  
Notary Public,  
State of South Carolina at Large.  
My Commission expires  
July 3, 2006.